Outsourcing Torture and Abuse

Kilmar Abrego García describes what he endured, and we all need to listen

JAY KUO

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Image from the El Salvador government's press office

Given its title and this image, if you've opened this article at all to read it I commen you. It isn't easy hearing about what our government is doing. It produces anger, revulsion and fear—all emotions that we'd rather not experience. So thank you for being willing to listen and read this far, and I hope you continue.

Yesterday, Kilmar Abrego García filed a brief in his criminal case, and for the first time we have a first-person account of what is going on inside of CECOT, the El Salvadoran prison to which the Trump regime sent hundreds of immigrants, all without any kind of hearing or due process.

What he recounts is horrifying, and it should be on the front page of every paper. Sadly, much of the media has grown numb to the horrors, lies and gross spectacle o this White House, and so it is often up to independent sources such as this newslet to report on it.

To date, we have only presumed, based on what the El Salvadoran government itsel released, that there was widespread abuse and physical torture occurring inside of CECOT. Human rights groups had verified this, but because no prisoner was ever supposed to get out, we haven't ever had a first-hand account. But through persiste we brought Abrego García home to the U.S.

And what he had to tell us confirmed our worst fears.

unknown.icarian@gmail.com Subscribe

A hardworking immigrant with no criminal record

Before we discuss what occurred in CECOT, it's important to remember that we ar talking about a fellow human. He is a man with a life, a family and a career. The Trump Department of Justice and the President himself have attempted to smear h name and label him a criminal (thus the photoshopped MS-13 tattoos and trumped- Tennessee indictment of May 21, 2025), but let's set the record straight here.

As the filing states:

- "Both Plaintiff Vasquez Sura and Plaintiff Abrego Garcia work to support thei family of five."

- "Before his unlawful removal, Plaintiff Abrego Garcia was a union member anc was employed full-time as a first-year Sheetmetal Apprentice. In addition, he h been pursuing his own license at the University of Maryland."
- "As a condition of his withholding of removal status, Plaintiff Abrego Garcia is required to check in with ICE once a year, and has been fully compliant. He appeared for his most recent check-in on January 2, 2025, without incident."
- "Separate and apart from the May 21, 2025 Tennessee indictment, Plaintiff Abr Garcia has never been arrested or charged with any crime in the U.S. or in El Salvador.
- "There remains no known link or association between him and the MS-13 gang any other gang, and no judicial tribunal has found that any such link or association exists."

It's important to remember that the government admitted in open court that Abreg García was sent to CECOT as a result of an "administrative error." As I wrote abou earlier, the lawyer who made that admission was later fired because he refused to si a brief saying that Abrego García was a terrorist, because there was no evidence to support that charge.

It's also important to remember that several news outlets have confirmed, through separate investigations, that most of the men sent to CECOT have no criminal reco And as I wrote about back in March, there are very likely innocent people who were summarily rendered to CECOT because of mistaken assumptions about their tattoc This is from the lawyers for Andry Hernández Romero, a barber who was caught up this horror show:

> Our client worked in the arts in Venezuela. He is LGBTQ. His tattoos are benigr But ICE submitted photos of his tattoos as evidence he is Tren de Aragua. His @ImmDef attorney planned to present evidence he is not. But never got the char because our client has been disappeared….

> Our client came to the US seeking protection but has spent months in ICE priso
> been falsely accused of being a gang member and today he has been forcibly
> transferred, we believe, to El Salvador. We are horrified tonight thinking what
> might happen to him now.

There are many other stories like this. And this makes what Abrego García was fina
able to tell us all the more horrifying.

Physical and psychological torture

In his filing, Abrego García recounts the first few days he arrived at CECOT. Any o
of these conditions, standing alone, would comprise torture and violate the Eighth
Amendment prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment had they occurred in the
U.S.

> Plaintiff Abrego Garcia reports that he was subjected to severe mistreatment up
> arrival at CECOT, including but not limited to severe beatings, severe sleep
> deprivation, inadequate nutrition, and psychological torture.

U.S. authorities put him in chains on the plane ride to El Salvador. Recall, this plan
should never have taken off in the first place, but U.S. officials, including Trump
attorney and Department of Justice lackey Emil Bove, conspired to ignore direct co
orders.

> Plaintiff Abrego Garcia was the first name called to disembark the plane that
> transported him to El Salvador on March 15, 2025. As he exited the aircraft, still
> chains, two officials grabbed his arms and pushed him down the stairs, forcing h
> head down.

The prisoners were used as props for political propaganda intended to portray the I
Salvadoran president as a ruthless strongman.

> There were strong lights illuminating the area despite it being nighttime, and cameras were filming the detainees' arrival.

The beatings and further humiliation began right after that.

> Plaintiff Abrego Garcia was pushed toward a bus, forcibly seated, and fitted with second set of chains and handcuffs. He was repeatedly struck by officers when h attempted to raise his head. He observed an ICE agent on the bus communicatin with Salvadoran officials to confirm the identities of the Salvadoran nationals or board before the bus departed.

The dehumanization, including being shaved with a razor and forced to move like cattle, occurred once they got to the prison. To dispirit them further, the prisoners were told they would die inside its walls.

> Upon arrival at CECOT, the detainees were greeted by a prison official who state "Welcome to CECOT. Whoever enters here doesn't leave." Plaintiff Abrego Garc was then forced to strip, issued prison clothing, and subjected to physical abuse including being kicked in the legs with boots and struck on his head and arms to make him change clothes faster. His head was shaved with a zero razor, and he w frog-marched to cell 15, being struck with wooden batons along the way. By the following day, Plaintiff Abrego Garcia had visible bruises and lumps all over his body.

Then the physical and psychological torture began. Read this and imagine yourself his position, without hope, without any information on why he was there, and wondering what pain and abuse was yet to come.

> In Cell 15, Plaintiff Abrego Garcia and 20 other Salvadorans were forced to knee from approximately 9:00 PM to 6:00 AM, with guards striking anyone who fell fr exhaustion.

> During this time, Plaintiff Abrego Garcia was denied bathroom access and soile himself. The detainees were confined to metal bunks with no mattresses in an overcrowded cell with no windows, bright lights that remained on 24 hours a da and minimal access to sanitation.

The prisoners officials used fear of the other prisoners as way to inflict more psychological dread and torment.

> While at CECOT, prison officials repeatedly told Plaintiff Abrego Garcia that th would transfer him to the cells containing gang members who, they assured him would "tear" him apart.

This was no idle threat.

> Plaintiff Abrego Garcia repeatedly observed prisoners in nearby cells who he understood to be gang members violently harm each other with no intervention from guards or personnel. Screams from nearby cells would similarly ring out throughout the night without any response from prison guards on personnel.

A warning of horrors to come

Abrego García is brave for coming forward with his account. He is still under threa deportation, perhaps back to El Salvador where he could face persecution and retribution. The new criminal charges he faces are so absurd and so blatantly politicized that the head of the criminal division in the U.S. Attorney's Office in Nashville, Ben Schrader, who has 15 years of experience in that office, resigned rath than pursue them as directed by Attorney General Pam Bondi.

His recounting of torture and abuse at the hands of a government that struck a *commercial agreement* to house migrants is a dark warning about the Trump regime' future plans. Rather than recognize and draw back from the potential for error, mistreatment and even death, the White House is doubling down. It is currently

speaking to several governments, including some with horrifying human rights records, to accept more immigrants.

Meanwhile, it is building domestic concentration camps in places like the swamps Florida, outsourcing the management of processing and detention to red state governors, each eager to prove they are harsher than the next. And it will fill those camps with immigrants who, like Abrego García, have no criminal records and hav been contributing members of society for years, sometimes decades.

The mind and heart reel at the inhumanity, until it becomes clear that this is the ve point. CECOT and camps like "Alligator Alcatraz" are meant to be human zoos. Th American public has already been conditioned to accept absurdities, such as that al immigrants are gang members, drug dealers, rapists and murderers. And bit by bit, are being led to accept the next new horror, until the horrors become atrocities.

When asked how it was possible the German people ultimately allowed the Nazi Pa to rise to power, to take the nation to war, and ultimately to commit the Holocaust, need not look further that what is happening in our name, using our tax dollars, thi very moment in the U.S.

Thoughts on Independence Day

I want to challenge the inevitability of this path. We can stop this madness, this descent into American fascism. But it will take all good people standing together tc so. Those in power are racing to establish a police state, concentration camps for immigrants, and ethnic cleansing through mass deportation. As I wrote about yesterday, their foot soldiers in ICE will soon multiply, thanks to the impending passage of the GOP budget. ICE will receive billions more in funding, making its allocation larger than the defense budgets for many countries. What we are seeing i Southern California will soon be happening all across our country as communities a forced to gather to resist ICE.

On this Independence Day, I'll be reflecting on why we broke from rule by a tyrant the first place. I'll remember how our demands for basic due process and no militarization of our cities and towns became unstoppable rally cries that fueled ou cause. That hard-fought war proved that it is not, and it is never, too late to resist, however we each choose to do so.

What will soon no longer be optional is picking which side you stand on. What is happening in CECOT, and what will soon be happening in the "Alligator Alcatraz" and similar camps here in the U.S., is wrong. It is immoral. It is un-American.

We cannot and must not rest until every person wrongly rendered there is brought back, until all these camps within our borders are closed, and until those who built them, gave the commands, defied court rulings, and violated international law are h to account.

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60 Minutes needs to have him on asap.

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Thank you for speaking and sharing these horrific truths. Especially the reference to people wonc how Hitler's Germany could have ever come to be. I am terrified and enraged.

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